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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABIDJAN 000369

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KINSHASA PASS TO BRAZZAVILLE

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [IV](#)

SUBJECT: COTE D'IVOIRE: THE UPS AND DOWNS OF THE PEACE
PROCESS

Classified By: POL/ECON Jim Wojtasiewicz, Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (C) Summary. As expected, The peace process is going through ups and downs. Pro-Gbagbo militias are threatening to take to the streets as they did in January, this time over the sequencing of identification vis a vis disarmament. Preliminary results indicate that only about 20 percent of students in the North passed the recently held examinations. President Gbagbo abruptly canceled a cabinet meeting after New Forces (FN) leader Soro chaired one the previous day in his capacity as acting Prime Minister. However, the chiefs of staff of government and rebel armed forces had a cordial though inconclusive meeting, their first since July. African Union President and Congolese President Sassou is visiting Abidjan April 6-9. We can only hope that Sassou's intervention will help break the current deadlock over the sequencing of identification and disarmament, perhaps by persuading the Ivoirians to go forward with both simultaneously. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Perhaps the most discouraging development this week was the threat by sanctioned militia leader Eugene Djue to repeat in late April the street disturbances of January, when pro-Gbagbo militias put up roadblocks all over Abidjan and attacked UN installations, unless Prime Minister Banny suspends his plan to issue national identification cards until the FN disarm. With the next meeting of the International Working Group (IWG) scheduled for April 20, Djue undoubtedly also meant to warn the IWG to stay out of the debate over the sequencing of identification and disarmament. The thuggish Federation of University and High School Students of Cote d'Ivoire (FESCI) threatened to heighten its protests against plans by the Minister of Higher Education, who is from the opposition RDR (Rally for Republicans) party, to reopen the University of Bouake, the capital of the rebel-held North. Young Patriots leader Charles Ble Goude announced plans to hold a big pro-Gbagbo youth rally next week.

¶3. (C) Another discouraging development was the release of preliminary results from the school examinations that were recently held in the North for the first time since 2003. The results indicate that only about 20 percent of the students passed their exams. Though unfortunate, this is perhaps not very surprising. The school system in the North has been limping along with the help of mostly volunteer teachers, after the government withdrew most of the regular teachers in 2002. In addition, the students had very little time to prepare for the exams. The announcement was made only a week or so before the exams were given, and many students had to travel considerable distances to the testing centers.

14. (C) Also a bit discouraging, though petty, was President Gbagbo's abrupt cancellation of a Council of Ministers meeting after FN leader Guillaume Soro had chaired a Council of Government meeting the previous day. A Council of Government meeting is a cabinet meeting chaired by the Prime Minister and attended by the President. A Council of Ministers meeting is a cabinet meeting chaired by the President and attended by the Prime Minister. Soro, number two in the government, chaired this week's Council of Government meeting when Prime Minister Banny fell ill. Gbagbo apparently did not want to chair a Council of Ministers meeting the next day with Soro attending as acting Prime Minister.

15. (SBU) On the positive side, General Phillipe Mangou, Chief of Staff of the FANCI (Armed Forces of Cote 'Ivoire), and General Soumahila Bakayoko, Chief of Staff of the FAFN (Armed Forces of the New Forces) met on April 4. This was their first meeting since July 31. The discussions were reportedly cordial though inconclusive. Bakayoko tabled a 19-point FAFN plan for the successful completion of disarmament and the reintegration and restructuring of the armed forces. The plan calls for the Prime Minister to issue a decree creating a structural and legal framework for these military-to-military talks to continue. The plan also calls for the creation of a combined joint command, identification "of the population and combatants," dismantling of both the pro-Gbagbo militias and the 4000 "New Recruits" who were hired into the defense and security forces from the ranks of the militias, and the return of civil administration to the north. It does not go into the sequencing of these steps vis a vis disarmament.

16. (SBU) Another somewhat encouraging development was the announcement that Sassou Nguesso, President of the Republic

ABIDJAN 00000369 002 OF 002

of the Congo and current President of the African Union, would visit Abidjan this week April 6 -8, to meet with Cote d'Ivoire's political leaders as well as to meet with COREP -- the committee of local representatives of members of the IWG.

17. (C) Comment. This sequencing issue is a very serious obstacle to the peace process, and we can only hope that Sassou's intervention will help break the current deadlock. At this point the Gbagbo camp is insisting that disarmament must come first, while the FN camp is insisting that identification must come first. Perhaps the Ivoirians can be persuaded to go forward with both processes simultaneously. End Comment.
Hooks